



**TOWN OF
MONTAGUE
MASSACHUSETTS**

TOWN HALL
One Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, March 13, 2025 6:30 PM

**Annex Meeting Room, Town Hall, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls and via Zoom
Meeting was recorded**

6:30PM: ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mark Fairbrother (Chair), Anthony Reiber, Sean Werle, Margaux Reckard, Justin Fermann, Al Averill, Toby Carter, Donna Francis

STAFF: Maureen Pollock (Staff Liaison, Planner/Conservation Agent)

ALSO PRESENT: Bree Sullivan (Fuss & O'Neil), Mark Zinan (Sunderland Conservation Commission), Steve Gowa (Sunderland resident), Jeanne Conway (Montague resident)

MOTION by J. Fermann to accept the meeting minutes of February 13, 2025. Seconded by M. Reckard

VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Donna Francis (Aye), MOTION PASSES (8-0) 6:34pm

PUBLIC MEETING:

NOI #2025-01/DEP #229-0266 – Town of Montague Department of Public Works (DPW) –

Request an approval of a Notice of Intent for repairs to Bridge M-28-036 on Swamp Road over Goddard Brook including repairs and/or replacement to the bridge, beam seats, beam ends, bridge rails and deck within the 200-foot Riverfront Area.

B. Sullivan gives a background of the project and the process. The bridge is on Swamp Road. The project was submitted for funding through the Small Bridge Program. The structure is under 18' span. The structure is part of a preservation to make repairs to prolong the life of the bridge. The bridge is currently rated as "fair". The issue is section loss and corrosion on the beams and beam ends. The beam ends are encased in concrete. The railings also do not meet current standards.

Goddard Brook is a perennial stream. The project will strip back the pavement, excavate the beam ends, reconstruct the superstructure, and add new curbs and rails. The bridge will not be widened or extended. The project will include work from the top side of the bridge only. The limit of work does not include Resource Areas with the exception of riverfront. They do not expect an impact to the Resource Area, with limited exceptions. There won't be equipment in the water. Anything of reasonable size or visibility that falls in the water inadvertently will be removed by the end of the day.

Once the project is approved the project will go back to Mass DOT for construction funding. That grant phase is once a year. The bridge project won't begin until the 2026 construction season, at the earliest. Presumably work on the Swamp Road Bridge Project will follow the completion of the South Street

Bridge. All work will maintain one lane on Swamp Road being open during construction with a temporary signal. Sullivan shows an image of the construction plan and staging. Duration for this project is from 12-20 weeks.

M. Reckard asks if the beam ends are structural, how is it possible to not have construction under the bridge. Sullivan responds that they aren't taking out the beams, only repairing the beam at the ends. They may have to jack the beam up but will do that from the beam seat. Sullivan shows an image of the bearing on the beam seat.

A. Reiber asks if the project will impact the water quality. Sullivan answers that there will be chipping and grinding of the concrete. Sullivan understands that cured concrete is fairly inert. Dust that gets in the waterway could be a turbidity issue, but they do not expect that amount of dust. Dust control is part of the contract. The Commission may apply conditions related to dust control. Shielding will be used between the beams to collect falling debris. The Conservation Agent reads the part of the narrative related to shielding/netting.

Justin Fermann asks if thermite will be used in the welding. Sullivan responds that bolting, not welding, is standard practice; companies bidding for this project will be pre-qualified by Mass DOT for bridgework. Fermann asks if there is a contingency plan if the scope of work expands. Sullivan cannot answer that question because she is not a bridge engineer however the design is for complete replacement of the concrete beam ends so the scope of work shouldn't expand. The plans will go to Mass DOT District II engineers for further review.

The site visit was attended by Al Avrill, Bree Sullivan and the Conservation Agent.

Avrill is also concerned about concrete dust. Ferman adds that the ph of fully cured concrete is almost negligible.

The Conservation Agent notes that a pine tree in the plan will be protected.

There will be no work on the North Side of the bridge.

Jeanne Conway (abutter) thanks them for protecting her tree on the south border. She heard that the project "would expand the river because it is too narrow...that is out of the picture, correct?" Sullivan responds that a stream might be widened in a full bridge replacement but that's not what they're doing. Conway asks about the timeline. Sullivan responds typically Late April- October, 7am-5pm with no weekends or holiday work. Conway is concerned about noise, traffic and dust. The Conservation Agent clarifies that the Town hopes to reopen the South Street Bridge in the spring/summer of 2025, which will alleviate some of the traffic. Center Street will be close until further notice.

T. Carter asks about debris related to heavy rain events. Sullivan responds that the crew will not be working on rainy days but it's a valid concern. There are sediment controls and related items in the contract. There is a timeframe for covering stockpiles of equipment. Silt fence and hay bales will prevent debris from flooding the abutter.

Conway asks for straw bales along the edge of the brook. Fairbrother responds that nothing will stop

flooding in the case of a major storm event. Conway might put bales along the stream on her own as it flows south toward her property.

Sullivan responds that the key to controlling construction debris is to not to allow debris to get in the stream in the first place.

Fermann mentions that if the abutter is flooded, the silt is from upstream not this project. Fermann mentions that an inexpensive turbidity monitor can be placed downstream to detect a change in the water quality. The Commission understands that such a monitor has value only in normal conditions. Werle sees it as “a stretch” and doesn’t like the idea of requiring the monitor and setting precedent for turbidity monitors in all future conditions.

MOTION by S. Werle to issue NOI #2025-01/DEP #229-0266 with conditions – Town of Montague Department of Public Works (DPW) for repairs to Bridge M-28-036 on Swamp Road over Goddard Brook including repairs and/or replacement to the bridge, beam seats, beam ends, bridge rails and deck within the 200-foot Riverfront Area. Seconded by D. Francis. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Donna Francis (Aye). MOTION PASSES (8-0) 7:24pm

NEW BUSINESS:

Eversource WT-11 TRRP Project – Request for Mitigation Suggestions

Later this year Eversource will be filing applications in Montague and surrounding communities related to widening and maintaining the transmission line from Northfield to Ludlow. As part of the project there will be some conversions of wetlands; they will be required to provide mitigations and are asking for some input on potential projects that Eversource could fund as an offset in impacted communities like Montague. The Conservation Agent has a list of some mitigation projects that they are actively pursuing. This list was emailed to Eversource. Project examples include storm drain design/repair on Oakman St, replace a box culvert on Meadow Rd, or the removal the old gravel and abandoned driveway on North Leverett Road. The Agent is curious how much funding Eversource is offering for any proposed project.

Al Averill asks if Eversource is removing trees from wetland and returning it to shrubs, what activity is being lost that requires mitigation? What is the loss of wetland function/value?

S. Werle thinks the answer to the question is that it is not changing the value. The Chair asks “do we care?” The Agent continues that we should utilize this generous offer by Eversource. She suspects it is a requirement of the Wetlands Protection Act. The Agent will reach out to the DPW Superintendent and ask for his ideas.

A. Reiber brings up the Meadow Road box culvert project; it’s in very bad shape and there is a lot of erosion from that outlet. He’d like to look at that project as a possibility.

Conversation will continue at the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

Falls Farm Violations– Old Sunderland Road (Parcels #50-0-18), property owner: James Arcoleo; Old Sunderland Road (Parcel #50-0-05, property owner: Falls Farm LLC; and Meadow Road (Parcel #50-0-04), Montague, Property owner: Falls Farm LLC

The Agent gives an update; Falls Farm did not meet the Mass DEP 2024 deadline for full compliance. Recently Mass DEP issued an order and Falls Farm/Arcoleo who consented and agreed that they are liable for the entirety of the violations listed in the order; obligated to complete actions in Section 3; are jointly- and severally- liable for the violations of the consent agreement; and jointly- and severally- obligated to the actions required under the consent agreement. The violations and corrective measures are listed in the consent agreement. Falls Farms has met some past requirements that were approved by DEP. The Agent reads the completed work. By April 1, 2025, Falls Farm needs to provide DEP with a resource area mitigation plan for comments, revisions, approval or rejection. Implementation of the mitigation plan must be finalized by the end of November 2025. A storm water plan needs to be implemented by October 30, 2025. Falls Farm has been issued a civil penalty of \$39,168 with only \$7,500 paid and the remainder suspended. The suspension can be revoked with a future violation. Falls Farm will need to put a sliver of land (2 acres) into conservation restriction to compensate for unrecoverable sediments.

The Montague Town calendar has this document in the meeting materials for this Commission meeting.

Falls Farm is also trying to install a dry hydrant or a fire pond. DEP will be present for the test pit. J. Fermann clarifies that a fire pond is a retained body of water. A dry hydrant is an access point to a non-pressurized pipe from which a fire truck would draw water.

Steve Gowa (from Sunderland) thanks the Montague Conservation Commission. He asks if Falls Farm could use the hydrant for irrigation or only fire purposes. M. Reckard responds that per the consent agreement, a plan for a fire pond/hydrant will be submitted on April 1st as well.

A member of the audience asks if DEP is aware that Falls Farm is still clearing trees. The Chair responds that there is no way to know what the DEP is considering or observing.

MOTION by M. Fairbrother to Adjourn. The meeting is Adjourned 7:52pm.